Nagoya SOM Summer Program 2026

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A year ago, I had the privilege of traveling to Japan as a tourist– a national tour of Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto– and my naive self thought I had seen a great deal of what Japan had to offer. From navigating the Japanese metro system, to visiting countless temples, to eating lots of ramen and sushi, I had thought I had "experienced" the culture of Japan. With Nagoya's program, I realized I could not have been more wrong.

This year, long metro rides became an opportunity for cultural exchange. Visiting temples became visiting the homes of patients. Eating ramen and sushi became a social tradition that transcended international boundaries. Nagoya's program offered an interactive opportunity to challenge pre-existing notions while providing an opportunity to expand cultural, academic, and medical horizons.

From the very first day, it became quite obvious how impactful and enjoyable the program would be. My buddies, Reina and Kattsu, immediately approached me with happy smiles and a welcoming attitude, helping me feel immediately at home while setting the tone for how our conversations would be approached with an open-mind. Through this initial interaction, I realized how kind and considerate Japanese culture is, which was not something I was able to experience as a tourist. Reina and Kattsu, from the start, openly shared their medical, cultural, and lifestyle perspectives in Japan while showing curiosity about mine. It was truly heartwarming to experience the Japanese hospitality and how much they care for people they may not necessarily know too well. Starting the day off by learning about the Japanese healthcare system was extremely eye-opening, and it was helpful to have this knowledge before interacting with the system. The research lab visit with Dr. Yatsuya only furthered this initial impression, as he too welcomed me with open arms and thoughtfully planned my experience. I really appreciated the program providing such an amazing opportunity to learn about Japan's perspective of a field of specialty the students are interested in, as through this lab visit, I was able to further expand my cultural awareness in medicine and public health. Dr. Yatsuya had prepared a presentation from his lab's graduate students that came from all over the world, including Bangladesh, Africa, Sri Lanka, Japan, and China. Hearing the impactful research and individual experiences with the healthcare system from their respective home countries was enlightening, and are definitely perspectives that I plan to bring home with me and share with my peers.

Every day thereafter presented a phenomenal, growing, and enlightening experience, but the home-health clinic visits stood out in particular, since this aspect of healthcare is severely lacking in the US. Mino City branch of the Kagayaki clinic with Dr. Mitsuyama further emphasized the considerate, kind, and welcoming nature of Japanese people and Japanese culture. From the smiles of Japanese strangers, to sharing breakfast at a Mino City community cafe, to the attentiveness of the medical care team's role in my learning, it became obvious how caring Japan is towards people of their community and the strong sense of responsibility towards people around them. It was truly inspiring and touching to see the deeply care healthcare provided at these home visits, and how well the physician gets to know their patients. Seeing the phrase "meeting people where they are at" in action is something I hope that the US can learn from and incorporate.

Overall, I have experienced waku-waku with Nagoya's program– the welcoming environment, perspectives offered from first-hand experience, cultural activities, and bonding activities with our buddies are priceless experiences of growth that I will remember and take with me for the rest of my life and for my time as a physician. Learning about and wearing yukatas while walking around the streets of Gifu gave me a glimpse of historical Japan. Ukai comodorant fishing with my peers and Nagoya buddies opened my

eyes to a world of culture and tradition. Late-night social events offered personal and direct experiences to understand Japanese society. Lectures, including those provided by Dr. Ichihashi, Dr. Ueda, and Dr. Desai, encouraged us all to think broadly and globally. I hope that every medical student would be able to experience a program as enlightening as Nagoya University's summer program, as I plan on applying and sharing everything I have learned and experienced.

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